

Government Approves Revised SHAKTI Policy

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved Revised **SHAKTI (Scheme for Harnessing and Allocating Koyala Transparently in India) Policy** for Coal Allocation to Power Sector.

- Introduced in 2017 by Ministry of Coal, SHAKTI Policy is a **transparent way of allocating coal to Power Sector**.

Key Highlights of the Revised SHAKTI Policy

- **Aim:** To address the sector's dynamic coal demands while promoting import substitution and reducing dependence on imported coal.
- **Simplified Allocation Framework:** It **streamlines coal allocation** by consolidating the earlier 8 categories into 2 simplified mechanisms to enhance ease of doing business in power sector.
 - ⊕ **Window-I:** Coal linkages at **notified prices** will continue to be provided to **thermal power plants owned by Central and State Governments**, including their joint ventures & subsidiaries.
 - ⊕ **Window-II:** **All thermal power producers** including those using domestic or imported coal can now procure coal through an auction process, paying a **premium over the notified price**.
- **Removal of Mandatory PPAs (Power Purchase Agreements):** For Window-II, the **PPA requirement has been scrapped**, encouraging **private sector participation**.
- **Caters to Sector's Dynamic coal Demands:** Auctions will allow procurement for periods ranging from up to **12 months to as long as 25 years**.
- **Preference to 'Pithead' power plants:** Promote setting up of Greenfield Thermal Power Projects primarily at pithead sites i.e. nearer to the coal source.

Other Key Reforms in the Coal Sector

- **Coal Mines (Special Provisions) Act, 2015:** Introduced a **transparent auction process**, enabling **private sector participation**, enhancing government revenue etc.
- **Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2021:** Introduced **composite Prospecting Licence-cum-Mining Lease (PL-cum-ML)**.
- **Commercial Coal Mining (2020):** Allowed private players to mine coal for commercial use without end-use restrictions.
- **Coal Mines Surveillance and Management System & Khanan Prahari App:** To Strengthen monitoring of illegal mining.

National Scheme for Industrial Training Institute (ITI) Upgradation and Setting up of five National Centres of Excellence for Skilling approved

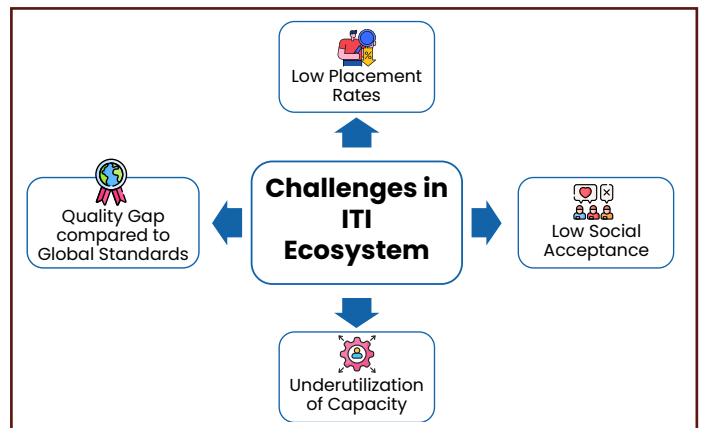
Announced under Budget 2024-25, the scheme will be implemented as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme.

About the Scheme

- **Aim:** Position existing ITIs as government-owned, industry-managed **aspirational institutes of skills**, in collaboration with State Governments and industry.
- **Total Outlay: ₹60,000 crore** (Central Share: Rs.30,000 crore, State Share: Rs.20,000 crore and Industry Share: Rs.10,000 crore) over five years.
 - ⊕ It will be **co-financed to the extent of 50%** of Central share by **the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank**, equally.
- **Focus:**
 - ⊕ Upgradation of **1,000 Government ITIs in hub and spoke arrangement** with industry aligned revamped trades (courses).
 - ⊕ **Capacity Augmentation** of five National Skill Training Institutes (NSTIs), including setting up of five National Centres of Excellence for Skilling in these institutes.
 - ⊕ Adopt an **industry-led Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) model** for an outcome-driven implementation strategy.

About ITIs

- **Structure:** Operating under state governments, ITIs have been **backbone of Vocational Education and Training (VET)** in India since the 1950s.
- **ITIs' Accreditation:** Entrusted to the **Directorate General of Training (DGT)**, apex organization of VET under Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship.
- **Status:** Presently, there are around 15,034 ITIs functioning, out of whom **78% are private owned**.
- **Schemes:** Skills Strengthening for Industrial Value Enhancement (STRIVE), Model ITI, Enhancing Skill Development Infrastructure in NE States (ESDI).



Study by Ladakh's Department of Wildlife Protection has estimated 477 snow leopards in Ladakh

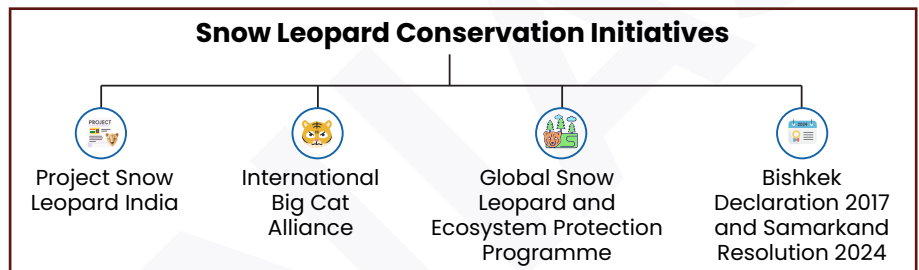
Ladakh has one of the world's highest densities of Snow Leopard, representing 68% of India's species population.

Key Highlight of Study

- **Area:** Globally highest extensive densities in Hemis National Park, Kargil, and Leh, making one of the **world's largest contiguous populations**.
- **Factors for high density:**
 - ⊕ **Resource-rich grasslands** with a moderate climate and greater availability of prey.
 - ⊕ **Less human disturbance** as 61% of snow leopards in Ladakh were found to co-exist alongside human populations.
 - ⊕ **Cultural reverence** for wildlife among Ladakh's communities, **economic benefits** from Snow Leopard tourism and **conflict management** strategies.

About Snow Leopards (*Panthera uncia*)

- **Geographical Spread:** Flagship species in the mountainous regions of South and Central Asia, spanning 12 countries.
 - ⊕ In India, found in Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Sikkim in Western Himalayas and Arunachal Pradesh in Eastern Himalayas.
- **Conservation status:**
 - ⊕ **IUCN Red List: Vulnerable.**
 - ⊕ CITES Appendix I and CMS Appendix I
 - ⊕ Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
- **Habitat:** Steep, rugged terrains with rocky outcrops and ravines at an elevation of 3,000-5,000 metres.
- **Characteristics:** Having **smokey-grey fur** patterned with dark-grey to black rosettes, they are **solitary animals**, most active at dawn and dusk.



India Launches Operation Sindoor

In response to the terror attack in Pahalgam, India has launched **Operation Sindoor**, the **largest cross-border strike on terrorist infrastructure since Balakot**.

- India cited its **right to respond and pre-empt** as well as deter more cross-border attacks like Pahalgam.

About Operation Sindoor

- It is a major military **offensive targeting terrorist infrastructure** in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK).
- The strikes were measured, calibrated, and non-escalatory and Indian forces used **niche technology weapons capable of precision strike**.
- Pakistan responded that it reserves the right to respond in accordance with **Article 51 of the UN Charter**.

India's Precision Strike Weapons

- **SCALP (Storm Shadow) Missile:** It is an air-launched, long-range (450 km) cruise missile, specifically designed for deep-strike operations against high-value targets.
- **HAMMER (Highly Agile Modular Munition Extended Range):** A precision-guided, stand-off munition with range of 50-70 kilometres.
- **Loitering Munitions** (referred as kamikazae drones): These drone systems hover over designated areas &, either autonomously/ under remote control, identify & neutralise threats.
- **METEOR:** It is a new-generation Beyond Visual Range Air-to-Air Missile (BVRAAM) system which is effective in dense electronic-warfare environments.
- **BRAHMOS:** These supersonic cruise missiles, operates on a '**Fire and Forget Principle**', adopting varieties of flights on its way to the target.

Article 51 of UN Charter

- It states that UN Charter does not impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a UN member.
- It urges the UN Security Council to take measures necessary to maintain international peace and security.
- It states that measures taken by Members in the exercise of this right of self-defence shall be immediately reported to the Security Council.

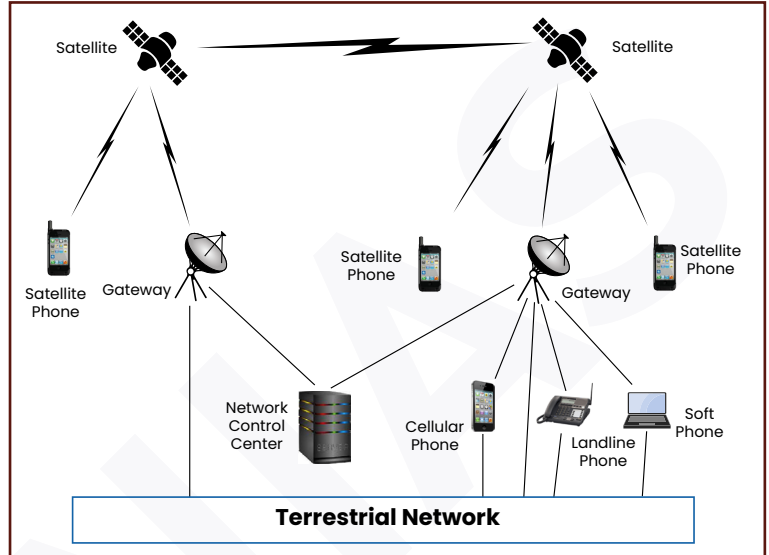
Department of Telecommunications issued additional security instructions for Satellite Internet Services

Additional Security Instructions have been **issued under Unified License (UL) Agreement** for the provision of the **Global Mobile Personal Communications by Satellite (GMPCS) service**.

- GMPCS license enables mobile communication services via satellite for users, especially in those regions where terrestrial networks' connectivity is limited.
- The service is specifically used in remote mining, oil and gas sectors, military, and disaster-affected regions.

Key Security Instructions

- Security Clearance:** Licensee must obtain **security clearance** for each **gateway/hub location** within India.
- Localization:** **Essential functionalities** of the **Network Control and Monitoring Centre** (like Lawful Interception facility, user data traffic routing etc) **shall be located in India**.
- Restrictions:** Licensee shall be able to **implement service restriction/denial** to any subscriber or geographical area during hostilities.
- Special Monitoring Zones (SMZs):** Areas within **50 km of international borders** and **Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ)** up to **200 nautical miles** must be designated as **SMZs** for monitoring of use activities.
- Mandatory indigenous manufacturing:** At least **20% of their ground segment of the satellite network** must be **indigenously manufactured within 5 years**.
- NavIC Positioning System Provisioning:** Licensees may ensure provisioning of **NavIC-based positioning**.



Also in News



Indo-Pacific Logistics Network

Quad partners – Australia, India, Japan and USA – concludes Indo-Pacific Logistics Network simulation in Honolulu, Hawaii.

About Indo-Pacific Logistics Network

- It is an initiative that **enables Quad partners to leverage shared logistics capabilities** in the Indo-Pacific **to support civilian response to natural disasters** more rapidly and efficiently across the region.
- IPLN, along with the **Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness**, reflects the **Quad's commitment** to ensuring a free and open Indo-Pacific and highlights the value of strengthening practical cooperation to address regional challenges.



Pulitzer Prize

The New York Times won four Pulitzer Prizes and The New Yorker three for journalism in 2024.

About Pulitzer Prize

- The Annual Pulitzer Prize is an esteemed set of awards presented annually by **Columbia University** in New York City.
- Pulitzer Prizes were established by **Joseph Pulitzer**, a Hungarian-American journalist and newspaper publisher, who left money to Columbia University upon his death in 1911.
- It recognizes outstanding achievements in **journalism, letters, and music**.
- It was first awarded in **1917**.



Copper

Copper deposits at Filo del Sol and Josemaría in Argentina places it among the top ten largest copper-producing mines in the world.

About Copper

- Copper is a soft, malleable, and ductile metal with very high thermal and electrical conductivity.
- Major Copper Producers in World:** **Chile is the world's largest producer of copper followed by Democratic Republic of Congo, Peru and China in 2024.**
- Top 3 States in India (Reserves):** Rajasthan (52%), Madhya Pradesh (23%) and Jharkhand (15%)
 - Major mines in India:** Singhbhum Copper Belt (Bihar), Khetri Copper Belt (Rajasthan), Balaghat District (MP), etc.



IMDEX Asia 2025

Indian Naval Ship INS Kiltan arrived in Singapore to **participate in 14th edition of International Maritime Defence Exhibition (IMDEX) Asia 2025**.

About IMDEX Asia

- Asia's leading naval and maritime defence event.
- Genesis:** 1997.
- Organizers:** Republic of Singapore Navy.
- Participation:** More than 70 countries.



Atmospheric Memory

A recent study found that the atmospheric memory, not just sunlight, drives the onset and retreat of monsoons.

Key Findings

- Atmosphere stores **physical information in the form of water vapor**, thereby controlling the **onset and withdrawal of the monsoon**.
 - ⊖ Earlier assumption was that this seasonal pattern of monsoon was primarily as an **immediate response to changes in solar radiation**.
- The state of atmosphere depends on **its seasonal history**: if it's already raining, the rain persists. But if it has been dry, it is hard to initiate rainfall. This behaviour is called **bistability**.
- At the same level of solar radiation, the atmosphere can **either be dry or rainy**, depending on the preceding state.



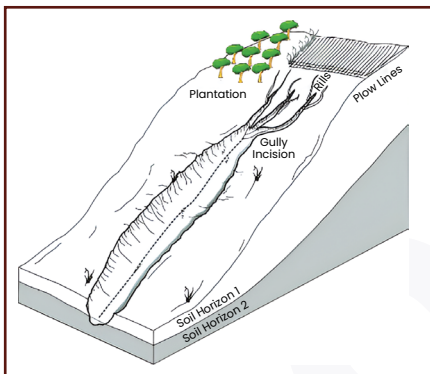
Gully Erosion

A study has recorded the presence of gully landforms in 19 states and National Capital Region of Delhi.

- States occupying **38% of Indian territory** (viz. Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Gujarat and Chhattisgarh) are affected by **92% of total gullied area**.

About Gully erosion

- Gully erosion is the **formation and subsequent expansion of erosional channels** in the soil as a result of **concentrated water flow**.
- **Impact** includes **direct loss of land, trees and crops**, changes in catchment hydrology, **land degradation and desertification**.



Gut Microbiota

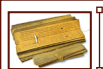
A recent study highlights that Climate-driven food shortage and undernourishment could affect the composition of the human gut microbiota.

Key Findings

- **Yield Reductions**: Decreased food availability leads to poor diets, which in turn impact gut microbial diversity.
- **Nutritional Quality Declines**: Rising atmospheric CO₂ reduces nutrients like iron, zinc, potassium, and proteins in key crops like rice and wheat.

Gut Microbiota

- The human gut hosts ~100 trillion microbes.
- **Dysbiosis & Disease**: Imbalances are linked to diabetes, IBD, eczema, and neurological disorders.
- **Non-Linear Impacts**: Gut disturbances don't follow a simple path; food shortages, heat, pollution, and infections may all interact simultaneously.



Ayurvedic Manuscript

Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences revives two rare Ayurvedic manuscripts: **Dravyaratnākara Nighantu** and **Dravyanamā-kara Nighantu**.

- The word Nighantu in Ayurveda implies the group of drugs, synonyms, properties and their description of part used.

About Dravyaratnakara Nighantu

- **Author**: **Mudgala Pandita**, composed in 1480 AD.
- Consists of 18 chapters offering in-depth knowledge on **drug synonyms, therapeutic actions, and medicinal properties**.
- It draws from **classical Nighantus like Dhanvantari and Raja Nighantu** while documenting novel medicinal substances from plant, mineral and animal origins.

About Dravyanamakara Nighantu

- **Author**: Attributed to **Bhisma Vaidya**.
- It focuses exclusively on **homonyms of drug and plant names**—a complex area of study vital to Ayurveda.
- It serves as a **standalone appendix to the Dhanvantari Nighantu**.



Draft framework for India's Climate Finance Taxonomy

The Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance, invited public comments on the **"Draft framework for India's Climate Finance Taxonomy"**.

About India's Climate Finance Taxonomy

- **The climate finance taxonomy** is a tool to identify activities consistent with India's climate action goals and transition pathway for industry and economy.
- **Objectives**: Mitigation, Adaptation and Support transition to promote climate-friendly technologies and activities by facilitating greater resource flow; Prevent Greenwashing, etc.
- **Principles (Based on 8 principles)**: Consistency with stated position on Climate Action and development priorities, Support Transition Activities, Promoting the use of Indigenous technologies etc.

Errata:

- In 'News Today' dated April 18, 2025, in the News titled **'India and International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) Signed the Headquarters Agreement'**, it was incorrectly mentioned that **5 countries** (Nicaragua, Eswatini, **India**, Somalia and Liberia) have formally signed its Framework Agreement.
 - ⊖ Correct information is that **7 countries** (Cambodia, Nicaragua, Eswatini, **India**, Somalia, Guinea and Liberia) have formally signed its Framework Agreement.



AHMEDABAD



BHOPAL



CHANDIGARH



DELHI



JAIPUR



JODHPUR



GUWAHATI



HYDERABAD



LUCKNOW



PRAYAGRAJ



PUNE



RANCHI



SIKAR